



For Immediate Release:

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Unions' reasonable wage proposal could settle contract dispute

Saskatchewan: The three unions representing 25,000 health care providers in Saskatchewan are hopeful the monetary offer they presented to employer groups at a common bargaining table yesterday will move the parties closer to achieving a fair contract settlement before Christmas.

The health care provider unions – the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the Service Employees International Union West (SEIU-West) and the Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union (SGEU) – are proposing a general wage increase of 5% for 2008, 5% for 2009 and 5% for 2010.

“Our general wage proposal addresses our memberships' need for equal treatment with other public sector employees, while our market adjustment proposals will deal with staff recruitment and retention problems in specific classifications,” says Barbara Cape, President of SEIU-West.

The unions' proposal is less than what some health region managers received, she notes.

Gordon Campbell, President of the CUPE Health Care Council, says health employers must recognize that negotiating a fair monetary package for health care providers is one of the best ways to retain existing staff and recruit new people to the health sector. “Heavy workloads and chronic staff shortages are driving people away from this sector,” says Campbell. “All the talk about putting patient's first is just talk until you deal with these staffing issues.”

Bonnie Erickson, Negotiating Committee Chair for SGEU, says health care providers across the province are anxious to conclude a reasonable contract settlement. “After 19 months at the bargaining table, it would be wonderful to have this agreement settled before Christmas,” she says.

Contract negotiations with health employers at a common bargaining table continue this week to Friday and resume December 1 – 3.

The CUPE Health Care Council received a strong strike mandate (88 per cent) from its membership in June over SAHO's continued demands for concessions. SEIU-West will announce its strike mandate on Monday.

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The province's health care providers include special care aides, licensed practical nurses, food services workers, laundry, housekeeping and activity personnel, maintenance, administrative, clerical, therapeutic and recreational workers, and medical technologists and technicians.

SEIU represents 11,000 health care providers in four health regions. SGEU represents 2,000 health care providers in three health regions. CUPE Health Care Council represents 12,600 health care providers in five health regions.

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Contact: Gordon Campbell 539-0661, Shawna Colpitts 227-5114 or Bonnie Erickson 541-3549.
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